LIFE'S WAYS.

The ways are long I walk alone—
The fields are dull and dreary;
My paths are set with thorn and stone—
My heart is worn and weary.
But skies are all a tender blue,
And filled with sunny weather,
When in the paths of joy we two
Walk, hand in hand, together.

I hear the happy thrushes tune
Their song in bush and bower;
I hear the bees their story croon
From honied flower to flower.
The music stirs me with distress—
I cannot kindly bear it;
For, O there is no joy unless
Your ear with mine may share it.

O come with me and glad the way
With eyes of beauty smiling,
December seems as glad as May
In your divine beguiling.
For, though we stray through gardens fair,
Or weary wastes of heather,
The paths are good and golden where
We two may walk together.
—Nixon Waterman, in L. A. W. Bulletin.

A Theater Diplomat

By William Armstrong

THE first act was almost over when the tenor, the soprano and the contralto got together in the wings and decided if the manager failed to arrive as he had telegraphed and settle up the pay-roll, now overdue, they would not sing the opera out.

When the news spread, as it quickly did, the chorus with slight dissent agreed in the plan. Many of them had been stranded before and the prospect was far from exhilarating, but the chance of getting even in some small way had the pleasure of novelty. The plan was in consequence tacitly agreed upon.

The basso, not in the original pronunciamento list, told the call boy that he need not bring the customary beer from around the corner after the second act.

As this meant that he would go after it in person no doubt was left in the minds of those concerned as to what course he would pursue.

Faces that a few moments before had appeared anxious now grew bright at the prospect of excitement.

The audience in front, not a bad one as the audiences of the new opera went, was in ignorance of the projected surprise.

The soubrette, usually the most inconsequent member of the company, alone was depressed.

"I tell you you don't know what you are about. As long as people think you are engaged, whether you get your money or not, there's a chance that they'll trust you, but if they know the company's disbanded there's no more chance about it." As in the world at large the voice of the philosopher went unheeded.

Not disconcerted the soubrette spread out her costume for the third act on the steam radiator and left the door of her dressing-room wide open that all might see as they passed by. Clearly she was not with the majority.

But Miss Casey had more at stake than the majority. She was engaged to Victor Laquine, a tenor in the chorus. They were to be married in the spring and would go into vaudeville in a happy domestic way.

A disbanding of the company on Christmas eve and their first engagement together booked for a summer garden in May made scarcely a pleasing prospect.

Engagements that year had been hard enough to get at any time and in mid-season would be scarcest of all. At the very best it meant different companies and separation, and that in turn meant good-by to matrimony and vaudeville. Miss Casey had been engaged before, she knew the sex.

On the stage the company guyed each other and the audience as only an unpaid company can.

Miss Casey alone was too preoccupied to pay any attention to it. Now and then she cast her eyes toward the rear of the theater hoping to see the manager's fur-decked overcoat moving about behind the last row of seats.

"I knew he wouldn't come!" every one said as they faced each other on the stage when the curtain had rung down.

"He'll come yet," said Miss Casey, with firmness. "Maybe his train's late; this heavy snow would stop anything, and if he comes and finds the theater dark when the third act ought to be on, I wouldn't give much for the tickets he'd give you to get home on."

There was logic in this, but the soprano pierced it.

"How do you know his train isn't in?" she inquired with dignity and a look at the interfering soubrette that would have silenced her, had she not been Miss Casey with much depending on her.

"Send the stage manager to the box-office telephone to see about it," put in the contralto.

"How do you know what road he is on? There are half a dozen or more. He may be on his way here now in a cab! He may step on the stage any minute and find everyone refusin' to go on instead of dressin' as we should. Any minute he may be rushin' in, I say!" Miss Casey was excited into the vernacular. Her words tumbled over each other and even those familiar with the go she put into her songs and dances would have been surprised at the energy she put into her progress to the dressing-room. It seemed to sweep the whole flank of chorus girls with it.

"Bring my beer," said the basso to the call boy, as his eyes followed Miss Casey's figure. Clearly he meant to sing the third act.

The tenor, the soprano and the contralto looked at each other and then at their retreating colleagues.

Presently the stage-hands, who had been interested auditors, began to set the scene for the third act.

Miss Casey was back in an incredibly short time. A critical eye might have found fault with her general appearance, but she was not thinking of critical eyes just then. The fate of that performance, and her own as well, depended upon her and she knew it. She knew furthermore that the task of getting this act on was mere play to what the next would be, unless the manager arrived.

Never before had this third act seemed so long. She had a great deal to do, and it generally passed quickly, for she enjoyed her work.

To-night she could scarcely act for casting her eyes toward the back of the theater. Once she forgot her lines entirely and her song ended with a little croak that was the nearest approach to an involuntary sob.

The soprano, still smarting under a recollection of Miss Casey's "interference," guyed her to the entertainment of the entire cast and the front rows in the parquet. Miss Casey, however, heeded nothing but the back row of chairs, behind which the manager, when he did make his appearance—if that happy moment were fated to come—would lounge importantly.

But never a sign there was of him, and by the time the soubrette got to her scene with the comedian it might have been high tragedy instead of low comedy as far as Miss Casey was concerned. For all his guying and indifference, the comedian had not reached a point when he could calmly see people get up and walk ostentatiously out in the midst of his best chance in the opera.

If he failed to tell her so the moment the descending curtain pole raised a little puff of dust on the stage it was because he could not get within hailing distance. Miss Casey seemed a moveable axis about which her colleagues revolved. Now she was at one side of the stage and the next moment at the other insisting that the manager would certainly come in the